

Amendments to the Claims

1-12. (Cancelled)

13. (Currently amended) A method comprising:

receiving from a subscriber on an access network an authentication request, the authentication request identifying the subscriber and identifying a designated service provider from among a plurality of service providers;

sending the authentication request to the designated service provider;

receiving from the designated service provider an authentication response indicating successful authentication of the subscriber by the designated service provider, wherein the authentication response ~~provides~~ includes a service qualification, ~~wherein the service qualification~~ that indicates at least one of (i) one or more types of services authorized for the subscriber and (ii) one or more extents of service authorized for the subscriber;

responsive to the authentication response, assigning the subscriber to operate in a designated layer of the access network set aside for subscribers that have been authenticated by the designated service provider and to operate according to the service qualification; and

serving the subscriber in the designated layer of the access network.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the access network is an IP network and the designated layer is an IP subnet, and wherein assigning the subscriber to operate in the designated layer comprises assigning to the subscriber an IP address in the IP subnet.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein serving the subscriber in the designated layer comprises handling communications with the subscriber according to a logic set established for the designated layer.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein handling communications with the subscriber according to the logic set established for the designated layer comprises:
detecting a packet bearing the IP address assigned to the subscriber; and
responsively applying the logic set to restrict transmission of the packet.

17. (Previously presented) The method of claim 13, wherein serving the subscriber in the designated layer of the access network comprises:

a gateway on the access network detecting a web page being sent to the subscriber;
and
the gateway modifying the web page to include an advertisement for the designated service provider.

18. (Original) The method of claim 13, further comprising prompting the subscriber to provide the authentication request.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein prompting the subscriber for the authentication request comprises:

presenting to the subscriber a set of the plurality of service providers; and

prompting the subscriber to select a service provider from among the plurality presented, wherein the subscriber selects the designated service provider from among the plurality.

20. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the access network comprises a wireless access network.

21. (Currently amended) A method carried out by an access network, the method comprising:

prompting a first client station to select a service provider from among a plurality of service providers, and receiving a signal from the first client station, indicating a first selected service provider;

sending a first authentication request message for the first client station to the first selected service provider, the first authentication request message indicating authentication information for the first client station;

receiving a first authentication response message from the first selected service provider, the first authentication response message indicating that first client station is authenticated by the first selected service provider, wherein the first authentication response ~~provides~~ includes a first service qualification that indicates at least one of (i) one or more types of services authorized for the first client station and (ii) one or more extents of service authorized for the first client station; and

in response to the first authentication response message, restricting the client station to communications in a first logical layer of the access network associated with the first selected service provider and according to the first service qualification.

22. (Currently amended) The method of claim 21, further comprising:

prompting a second client station to select a service provider from among a plurality of service providers, and receiving a signal from the second client station, indicating a second selected service provider;

sending a second authentication request message for the second client station to the first selected service provider, the second authentication request message indicating authentication information for the first client station;

receiving a second authentication response message from the second selected service provider, the second authentication response message indicating that second client station is authenticated by the second selected service provider, wherein the second authentication response ~~provides~~ includes a second service qualification that indicates at least one of (i) one or more types of services authorized for the second client station and (ii) one or more extents of service authorized for the second client station; and

in response to the second authentication response message, restricting the second client station to communications in a second logical layer of the access network associated with the second selected service provider and according to the second service qualification.

23. (Currently amended) A communication system comprising:

means for prompting a first client station to select a service provider from among a plurality of service providers, and for receiving a signal from the first client station, indicating a first selected service provider;

means for sending a first authentication request message for the first client station to the first selected service provider, the first authentication request message indicating authentication information for the first client station;

means for receiving a first authentication response message from the first selected service provider, the first authentication response message indicating that first client station is authenticated by the first selected service provider, wherein the first authentication response ~~provides~~ includes a first service qualification, ~~where the first service qualification~~ that indicates at least one of (i) one or more types of services authorized for the first client station and (ii) one or more extents of service authorized for the first client station; and

means for responding to the first authentication response message by restricting the client station to communications in a first logical layer of the access network associated with the first selected service provider and according to the first service qualification.

24. (Currently amended) The communication system of claim 23, further comprising:

means for prompting a second client station to select a service provider from among a plurality of service providers, and for receiving a signal from the second client station, indicating a second selected service provider;

means for sending a second authentication request message for the second client station to the first selected service provider, the second authentication request message indicating authentication information for the first client station;

means for receiving a second authentication response message from the second selected service provider, the second authentication response message indicating that second client station is authenticated by the second selected service provider, wherein the

second authentication response ~~provides~~ includes a second service qualification, ~~wherein the second service qualification that~~ indicates at least one of (i) one or more types of services authorized for the second client station and (ii) one or more extents of service authorized for the second client station; and

means for responding to the second authentication response message by restricting the second client station to communications in a second logical layer of the access network associated with the second selected service provider and according to the second service qualification.

25. (New) The method of claim 15, further comprising:
before receiving the authentication response, assigning the subscriber to operate in a default layer of the access network; and
handling communications in the default layer according to a default logic set.

26. (New) The method of claim 16, wherein handling communications with the subscriber according to the logic set established for the designated layer comprises:
disallowing communications from the subscriber to outside of the access network.

27. (New) The method of claim 16, wherein handling communications with the subscriber according to the logic set established for the designated layer comprises:
disallowing a predetermined type of communication from passing from the subscriber to outside of the access network.

28. (New) The method of claim 15, wherein handling communications with the subscriber according to the logic set established for the designated layer comprises:

detecting a web page being sent to an address on the designated layer; and

injecting into the web page information specific to the designated service provider.

29. (New) The method of claim 28, wherein the information comprises an advertisement for the designated service provider.

30. (New) The method of claim 13, wherein the subscriber communicates via an air interface with the access network.